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# Students' Satisfaction Towards Academic Courses In Blended Weekend Classes Program

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## Abstract

The study intended to measure the level of satisfaction of the undergraduate students from the blended weekend classes (BWC) in relation to the academic courses they take. We think that student satisfaction is influenced by their attitude regarding the quality of the textbooks, on one hand, and by the quality of face-to-face activities, on the other hand. The method we used was linear regression with mix purpose: explicit and predictive. We tried to analyze the factors that had a significant influence on students' satisfaction regarding the courses they took. The results were obtained on a group of 144 undergraduate students from University of Oradea, Faculty of Social and Humanistic Sciences, specialization of Pedagogy of Primary and Preschool Education. The findings support our hypothesis that students' satisfaction towards the courses they take is influenced by the quality of the textbooks and face-to-face activities (Adjusted R Square=.834,  $p<.01$ ). Our students' satisfaction regarding the courses they take increases if they have a positive attitude towards face-to-face activities ( $\beta=.608$ ), and towards their textbooks ( $\beta=.514$ ).

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## 1. Outlook on Pedagogy of Primary and Preschool Education Study Program at University of Oradea

For twelve years the University of Oradea in Romania ran a weekend face-to-face program for our students who could not attend the full-time on campus day classes. Most of our weekend students worked full time, lived long distances from the campus or had family commitments which inhibited their ability to be full-time students. As societal life has changed for our students in Oradea and across Romania it became apparent that students had developed other needs in order to be successful in programs like ours. During a state visit in 2010 we determined

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that our program required changes to meet the needs of our modern day students. The most important element required by our program was to develop a process by which our students would not miss class time due to travel issues, work conflicts or family issues. We determined that the best alternative for our students would be a hybrid program in which students would meet face-to-face on weekends and conduct other class work online. The online portion of the program allowed us the opportunity to develop resources and activities that students could use to accomplish their work on a more individual basis. Our students are pre-service teachers and we determined that they would be better served in a hybrid program rather than a full-time online program. A second important element of our program that we believed should improve was quality management (Popa & Bochis, 2013). We defined the quality of a hybrid program as containing the following elements: quality curriculum, academic plan, face-to-face classroom activities, online activities, supervision and development of instruction, and open and transparent communication with the public. The hybrid program that we developed in our attempt to achieve our quality goals has been implemented during the past three years and we are at the point of assessing our progress in order to further improve our effectiveness with our students.

## 2. General Outlook on Quality Management Program of Pedagogy of Primary and Preschool Education Study Program

Today, the assurance of a university successfully achieving its mission and strategic plans cannot be assessed without the implementation of a quality control system; most European academic institutions view quality monitoring as a fundamental element for increased competitiveness (Kember, Leung, & Kwan, 2002). Within the University of Oradea, as well as within the Center for Distance Learning (DL) and Blended Weekend Classes (BWC), quality management has the following main dimensions: managerial program quality, educational process quality, study program quality, and high efficiency of all academic activities. The Center for Distance Learning and Blended Weekend Classes has and follows a Quality Management Program for these programs to assess and assure the achievement of the objectives of the blended weekend classes program in accordance with the requirements of the accreditation criteria designed by the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education. The Center has designed and continually updates a series of Procedures for DL/BWC study programs quality management that was approved by the University Senate, such as:

- Procedure for curriculum framework monitoring for BWC study programs (2013, retrieved from <https://www.uoradea.ro/Reglementari+interne+ale+UO>)
- Procedure for updating academic materials for DL and BWC study programs (2012, retrieved from <https://www.uoradea.ro/Reglementari+interne+ale+UO>)
- Procedure for continuous training for the staff of DL and BWC study programs (2012, retrieved from <https://www.uoradea.ro/Reglementari+interne+ale+UO>)
- Procedure for performance assessment of teachers of DL and BWC study programs (2012, retrieved from <https://www.uoradea.ro/Reglementari+interne+ale+UO>)
- Procedure for monitoring DL tutorials, BWC training practice and DL/BWC bidirectional communication activities (2012, retrieved from <https://www.uoradea.ro/Reglementari+interne+ale+UO>).

In addition to those listed above there is a *Procedure for academic courses and teachers' quality assurance and assessment* designed and applied equally at the level of the whole University of Oradea.

This paper describes the results of our study related to two of the quality assurance procedures: Procedure for updating academic materials for DL and BWC study programs and Procedure for academic courses and teachers' quality assurance and assessment. The *Procedure for updating academic materials for DL and BWC study programs* is intended to periodically improve the topic contents of materials that comply with DL/BWC regulations for the academic courses comprised in the education framework of such study programs. It requires that all academic courses in the curriculum framework of a DL/BWC study program would be covered by specific materials for learning purposes using DL/BWC regulations. Thus, each *Module* should comprise: specific objectives, keywords, class activity planning, theory units, practice units for understanding and consolidating the theoretical knowledge (check-out tests), self-assessment tests, assessment tests, compulsory and additional bibliography (e.g. textbooks). Every course should have a succession of class activities that should help students learn independently and develop specific DL/BWC training skills. The graphic design and form of the textbooks are not important, but their content should follow a series of DL/BWC study program requirements (more units for self-study, the necessity of a

permanent self-assessment, the need of practice for theoretical knowledge and skills in real and hypothetical professional contexts, the need of self-organizing the requested material, and the student's own learning process). This Procedure is annually applied for each of the academic courses in the Curriculum Framework and Job Function List for the BWC study programs. Each year the students assess the quality of these textbooks through the use of the online *BWC student textbook assessment questionnaire*. Students complete the questionnaire anonymously and the teachers cannot access the platform page that manages this post. The present study works with data gathered after the application of this questionnaire. The University of Oradea applies the *procedure for academic courses and teachers' quality assurance and assessment* instrument to assess the professional performances of the teachers from BWC study programs. It allows the students to express their attitude in relation to the teaching methods of their teachers and towards the academic courses they take. This procedure is applied annually for all teachers comprised in the Job Function List for the BWC study programs and for all academic courses in the education framework. This study analysed the results of one questionnaires of this procedure: *Teaching assessment student questionnaire – face-to-face and training activities (e.g. lab activities, projects, project works)*.

### 3. Linear regression with mix purpose

The study measured the level of satisfaction of the students from blended weekend classes (BWC) towards different academic courses in relation to the quality of textbook and for the quality of face-to-face activities. The study was designed to answer the following questions:

- Is student satisfaction towards different academic courses influenced by their attitude about the quality of the textbooks? If yes, in what way?
- Is student satisfaction towards different academic courses influenced by their attitude about the quality of face-to-face activities? If yes, in what way?

#### 3.1. Hypothesis

The satisfaction of the students from blended weekend classes towards different academic courses is significantly influenced by student satisfaction towards the texts used in the classes and by their perceived quality of the face-to-face activities. The dependent variable chosen for this study is represented by the satisfaction of the students enrolled in blended weekend classes towards different academic courses from the university education framework, during the three-year preparation for reaching a Bachelor's Degree.

#### 3.2. Subjects

The participants in this study were 144 undergraduate students from the University of Oradea, Faculty of Social and Humanistic Sciences, Department of Educational Sciences, specialization of Pedagogy of Primary and Preschool Education, enrolled in blended weekend classes, from all three years of the Bachelor's Degree Program.

#### 3.3. Research Methods

The subjects filled in two questionnaires, one in relation to the assessment of textbook quality, and one in relation to the quality of face-to-face activities. Participants were also asked to respond to the following statement: *My expectations for this course have been achieved*, by choosing the suitable answer on a five-point Likert scale. The questionnaire on textbook quality assessment comprised 10 items (e.g. *The textbook has logical content. The textbook was easy to understand and it helped me learn for my exams. The textbook was useful for completing the course tasks*). The questionnaire in relation the face-to-face activity assessment contained 9 items (e.g. *The teaching methods of the teacher were effective. The teacher always answered students' questions for his/her course. The face-to-face activities followed a logical structure. The allocated class time was fully used.*). The participants could choose one of the fifth possible answer variants on a Likert scale, from 1 – total disagreement, to 5 – total agreement. The two scales are in the process of being validated through a soon-to-be published study.

### 3.4. Method

We used a linear regression methodology with a mix purpose: explicit and predictive, to analyze the factors that significantly influence the students' level of satisfaction towards their academic courses.

### 3.5. Results

As a method of coding the answers in SPSS 18 we have used numerical variables (the students' satisfaction towards different academic courses, the quality assessment of face-to-face activities and textbooks). For the analysis for cases of invalid data we used the method known as "Cook's distance". Due to the lack of any invalid cases in our data base, we have kept in our study all 144 subjects. We encountered no problems for the multicollinearity of the independent variables included in the study, the values of *tolerance* coefficient being higher than .20, and for VIF (*variance-inflation factor*), the values were no higher than 4.0. For the Durbin-Watson test that verifies the assumption of independent observations, the analysis of explicit and predictive factors of satisfaction towards different academic courses resulted in a value of 1,787, thus the assumption is verified. The factors considered as significant for explaining the students' expectations are introduced in the regression analysis by using the *enter* method and they refer to the quality assessment of face-to-face activities and of the textbook (see *Table 1*). *Table 1* displays the relations that are established between the students' expectations towards the academic courses and the criterion variables of the study.

Table 1. Descriptive coefficients and the correlation matrix for the variables involved in the pattern

Variables	m	s.d.	1	2	3
Students' satisfaction towards academic courses	6,216	1,000	-		
Quality assessment for the textbook	51,263	5,799	.711**	-	
Quality assessment for face-to-face activities	46,437	5,499	.775**	.325**	-

\*\*p<.01, \*p<.05

According to the correlation matrix, there is a statistically significant direct relationship between the students' satisfaction towards the academic courses and the variables related to: quality assessment of the textbook ( $r=.711$ ,  $p<.01$ ), quality assessment of face-to-face activities ( $r=.775$ ,  $p<.01$ ), and between the quality assessment of the textbook and that of face-to-face activities ( $r=.325$ ,  $p<.01$ ). In the ANOVA global test, we searched for F values that correspond to significance thresholds lower than .01 ( $F(2,141)= 360,622$ ,  $p<.01$ ), in order to be able to dismiss the null hypothesis of the independent variables in favour of the hypothesis that the regression pattern is significant, thus the regression is adequate for the established goal.

We tested each variable from within the two patterns with a t Student test.

Table 2. The values obtained at t Student test for the two variable

Variables	t	p
Quality assessment of the textbook	14,263	.000
Quality assessment of face-to-face activities	16,894	.000

The data allowed us to draw a conclusion in relation to the significant variables for our study; they are presented in *table 3*.

Table 3. Linear regression analysis on the factors that influence the students' expectations towards the academic courses

Variables	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Beta	B	SE b
(Constant)				-9,675	.363
Quality assessment of the textbook	.836	.834	.514	8,855	.006
Quality assessment of face-to-face activities			.608	.111	.007

\*\*p<.01, \*p<.05

The findings support our hypothesis that student satisfaction about the courses they take is influenced by the quality of the textbooks and face-to-face activities ( $\text{Adj.R}^2=.834^{**}$ ), which means these variables explain 83,4% of the variance regarding students' satisfaction with the academic courses, the rest of 16,6% of the variance is due to

other factors that were not included in our regression pattern. For the quality assessment of the textbook, the beta coefficient shows that it has a significant contribution to student course satisfaction ( $\beta=.514$ ;  $t$  is significant at  $p<.01$ ). The positive assessment of the quality of the textbook has a direct influence over the dependent variable; when the assessment of the textbook increases with a standard deviation, the students' satisfaction level towards the academic courses increases with a standard deviation of .514. The correlation between the positive quality assessment of the textbook and the high satisfaction of the students towards the academic courses was 8,855 ( $b=8,855$ ). Thus, the positive assessment of the textbook is a significant predictor of the satisfaction level towards different academic courses. For the quality assessment of face-to-face activities, the  $\beta$  coefficient shows that it has a significant contribution to student satisfaction of their courses ( $\beta=.608$ ;  $t$  is significant at  $p<.01$ ). When the quality assessment for face-to-face activities increases by one standard deviation the level of student satisfaction towards academic courses increases by .608 standard deviations. There is also a positive correlation ( $b=.111$ ) between the criterion variable, the level of student quality assessment for face-to-face activities, and the dependent variable, student satisfaction towards academic courses.

#### 4. Discussion

The findings support the statement that the level of student satisfaction from blended weekend classes (BWC) is high if students have positive assessments of face-to-face activities ( $\beta=.608$ ) and their textbooks ( $\beta=.514$ ). This study underlines two important considerations in the development of any course for blended weekend classes (BWC), specialization Pedagogy of Primary and Preschool Education: quality assessment of face-to-face activities and quality assessment of the textbooks. Professors should seriously consider both factors when they develop courses, course work, face-to-face activities and choose texts and other class resources.

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